My Man Hannibal

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My Man Hannibal

by extremelyperturbed

Summary

After watching some Jeeves and Wooster episodes, I decided to make Will a wealthy English gentleman with the worst luck in the romance department, Hannibal his sharp and ever scheming valet, and Jack the annoying relative who insists that he should get married.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

In the court room, Will Graham mentally escaped into a vision of fishing while standing in the middle of a flowing stream while the judge scolded him for wandering around in his underwear in the middle of the night in the streets, smelling of liquor. After a lengthy lecture regarding hooliganism and debauchery, the judge fined him a grand sum of five pounds for that most heinous crime. Will knew it would do no good to point out that he had spent the night drinking by himself in his own apartment and his being out of doors was only due to his unfortunate habit of sleepwalking.

Once he had returned home, he still had a rather vile hangover and was wondering whether he should sleep it off or attempt to curb the edges of it with a bit of hair of the dog when the doorbell rang. The insistence and the loudness of the bell only served to make him feel more surly than usual. He opened the door to see an older man, well groomed and smartly dressed with a severe expression. “I want sent by your uncle Jack Crawford. I was informed that you were in need of a valet. May I come in?”

“I have told my uncle a million times that I’m perfectly able to take care of myself.”

“I am sure that is true as long as you are awake.”

That remark only made Will scowl. “I’ll just tie myself to the bed next time.”

“It would seem that you have a hangover. I could make something that would help with that if you let me in.” Seeing Will’s hesitation, he added, “I will leave for good if it doesn’t.”

Will stepped back to make room for this man. The man strode confidently into the apartment that Will lived in and went to the kitchen where he quickly made a drink out of various ingredients before handing it to him.

Will looked at the concoction dubiously. After he drank it, however, the pain in his head miraculously disappeared. “What’s in this?”

“I prefer to keep my counsel regarding the recipe. If you are in the mood for breakfast, I can easily make you some scrambled eggs and toast.”

“Sure.”

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“Wilberforce Graham,” said Uncle Jack as he sat across Will at his dining table in his mansion. “You must get married.”

“Who would take me?” said Will.

“You are not ugly and you have money. We can find someone.“ Jack waved away his concerns. “You need someone to be your bedrock, strong and reliable. Someone to make up

for your . . .”

“Make up for my what?” snapped Will. He was well aware of his various faults and did not like to be reminded of them.

“Do not take that tone of voice with me. Besides, I have someone in mind.”

“You have already tried engaging me to a countless number of people, many of whom have turned out to be insane.” Will was not exaggerating much on this point. Jack had done him the grave disservice of introducing him to a long line of eccentrics as possible marriage candidates. They ranged from a man utterly obsessed with hunting deer, another man with an uncontrollable religious mania, and a lady who insisted on inflicting everybody around her the dubious results of her beekeeping and lessons in acupuncture. And if anything, he was sure to introduce him to an even longer line of even more perverse candidates.

Jack brushed off his criticism. “I assure you that the next one will match you perfectly.”

“Also what is the big idea of sending me a valet?”

“Oh, you mean Hannibal Lecter? You are very lucky to get him. He has the most impeccable references.”

“Then why didn’t his previous employer keep him?”

“It was a tragedy. His last employer died in an accident, thus causing his valet to be back on the market. There was quite a bidding war.”

Will raised an eyebrow.

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“Is anything the matter, sir?” said Hannibal as he drew Will’s bath.

“My uncle wants me to marry someone, continue the family line. Unfortunately, his record as a matchmaker is horribly lacking.” Will stripped off his clothes and stepped into the warm water.

“I see.”

“Truth is that I wouldn’t mind settling down and having a family but not with any of the ones he had in mind.”

“Have you done your own search?”

“The ones I was interested in . . . the feelings were never mutual.” Will sniffed the bath water. “What did you put into my bath?”

“You don’t like the smell, sir?”

“It’s not a bad smell. It’s chamomile?”

“Yes, sir. It‘s aromatherapy, meant to help you relax. Your previous valet did not do this for you?”

“I’ve never really had a valet before,” said Will.

“I see. If you like, I could scrub your back.”

Will shook his head. “That won’t be necessary.”

“As you wish, sir. Though I highly recommend it.”

Chapter 2

“What have you done with my wardrobe? Where are my clothes?” said Will when he opened the door to his wardrobe to choose what he would wear that day. However, all of his clothes had been replaced by more than a dozen new suits that he had never worn before.

Lecter looked terribly surprised at Will‘s anger. “Your wardrobe was most unflattering and unsuitable for the purpose of courtship. I did my best to remedy that. Do they not fit you, sir?”

Will put on a suit so he could show his valet that they did not, only to find that they not only fit but was cut in a most flattering manner. “How ever did you get my measurements?”

“I used your previous suits and I am also a very good observer. Now how about breakfast?”

“You are not to do that again.”

“I believe it won’t be necessary, sir.”

Will scowled but he had to admit to himself that there was nothing he could do now.

“How did you sleep?” said Lecter.

“Good enough.” When he had woken up, he found that he could not open the door. On the other side, Lecter had wedged a chair against it so he could not get out and embarrass himself again.

Lecter served him eggs seated in small circles of brioche. There was also fresh squeezed orange juice, a small fruit salad and tea. Will was surprised when Lecter made a table setting for himself and sat opposite him. “What are you doing?” said Will.

“Nobody else is here to disapprove of my eating with you. Do you disapprove?”

“It’s not so much that but . . .”

“I can go to the kitchen if you prefer . . . But I had hoped that we could share a meal and get to know each other better. I know that my being here was not your idea but I would like to make things more friendly between us.”

Will gave him an appraising look. “Did you do this with your previous employers?”

“I extend my services to each of my previous employers according to their needs and merits. I believe it is my duty to help you reach your potential.”

Will felt uncomfortable at Lecter‘s gaze, feeling very much like a plate of medium-rare steak being eyed by a hungry diner. He also knew that Lecter had not precisely answered his question. Knowing that Lecter would continue to prevaricate, he decided to take a bite of the

breakfast dish instead. Whatever Lecter's faults, he knew how to cook well. "I'd rather you ignore my potential and just help me get through the day."

"Yes, sir."

There was something very teasing and insouciant about the way he used the word "sir" that ruffled Will's feathers. He had mentioned it to Jack previously but Jack, per usual, had thoroughly dismissed the idea. He decided to concentrate on his breakfast, which at least afforded him uncomplicated enjoyment.

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Later in the afternoon, Will had gone to the Science Club, where he met his friend Brian for lunch. Will said, "I'm looking to get out of London and go to the countryside for some solitude. I was wondering if I could rent out one of your cottages." He decided not to mention that he hoped that he could avoid more of Jack's unwelcome surprise visits for a short period of time.

"I have half a dozen you can choose from. I'd actually like the rent. Finances have been running a bit short nowadays."

"That's too bad."

"I think that things might turn around soon. I think I've found someone I can sell my estate to, an investor from overseas. I still get to keep the village so I'll still have some money coming in."

"That's great."

"Nothing is set yet but I'm hopeful."

***

"I am going to the countryside to do some fishing. I rented a cottage from a friend of mine, Brian Zeller," said Will to Lecter as they had dinner, the main entrée being a dish of braised tongue and tripe. "If you prefer to stay in London and look after the apartment . . ."

"No, my place is at your side," said Lecter. "When do you plan on going, sir?"

"I plan on going tomorrow. I don't know how long I'll be staying there." Will had half hoped that Lecter would be resistant about moving to a small cottage.

"Then I shall pack our things tonight."

"I've been meaning to ask . . . Why do you cook so much offal?"

"You don't like it?"

"I love your cooking but I don't think I've ever eaten so many unusual bits of the animal."

"It is my personal philosophy that every cut of meat has value as long as it is given proper treatment. If you prefer, I can make a roast or a chop instead tomorrow."

Will sighed. His valet was giving his former suitors a run for their money in eccentricity.

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Sitting in the cottage, Will smiled as he looked at his fishing poles and lures, all ready for an afternoon's worth of fishing. He turned to Lecter and said, "I'm set for this week and next but what will you do?"

"I'm sure I will find many things to occupy myself between my duties. I can draw, catch up on my reading and write letters to various people I owe correspondence to."

"I will be having lunch with Brian first. I'll be driving to the estate but hope to be back before two. I hope that I'll have caught enough fish for the both of us. What kind of preparation do you have in mind?"

Lecter gave him a little smile. "Depends on the fish."

***

Will drove up to the front of Brian's manor. It was a lovely house but an old one in need of repairs and continual upkeep. There was of course, the need to keep up appearances with the appropriate amount of servants and parties. As Will had no ancestral estate eating at his own fortune, he could not blame Brian for wanting to unburden himself of it.

He hopped out of his house and walked to Brian, who was waiting for him. "Brian!"

"Will! I hope you don't mind if I have other people lunching with us. The investor I talked about is sending a representative to talk terms. I know how hard it is for you to warm up to people."

"You're the host," said Will, shrugging.

They were interrupted by another car that stopped in front of the manor. A woman hopped out of the car and exclaimed, "Will? Will Graham?"

"Beverly?"

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Brian turned to Will with a scowl, “You know her?”

Will tried to motion her to be quiet but Beverly merrily said, “Yes, we met on a cruise ship that was going from London to New York, had a fun little romance that lasted as long as we were on the water, but ended once we reached land.”

“What are you doing here?” said Will. He was completely and utterly gob smacked.

“I’m here on behalf of my father and his company to see if the estate is worth converting into a hotel. I never thought I‘d ever lay eyes on you again. I got to say you‘ve really gotten all spiffed up,” she said, complimenting his clothes. "Maybe I wouldn't have let you go so easily if you had looked like that on the ship."

“Let me show you around the estate,” said Brian. “It’s two hundred acres.”

“See you at lunch,” said Beverly as she walked off with Brian.

Will groaned to himself. He had no ill feelings towards her; theirs had been a mutual and amicable parting based on their understanding that his extreme introversion and her love and enjoyment of the family business could not fail but to come into conflict. Unfortunately, she was the sort who enjoyed flirting and teasing people. He could tell that Brian was jealous and was under the misapprehension that there might be a renewed spark. He would have to spend some time to disabuse him of the idea. Very few things irked Will more than being mistaken as a love rival.

***
When Will saw them coming back towards the estate, he could see that Brian looked a bit down at the mouth. “What’s wrong?”

Beverly sighed. “It’s a beautiful place but it’s too far from London to sustain enough business for a hotel, especially of this size. I could try crunching the numbers closely but from a top of the head estimate, it just doesn‘t work.”

“We could offer the estate as a way for tourists to have the full experience,” said Brian.

Beverly shook her head. “Not enough customers could afford renting the entire place to make it work. But I do have someone interested in the estate who could pay the asking price.”

“Oh, really?” Brian perked up at the news.

“The problem is that he’s not interested in making the place into a hotel. He wants to make it into a sanitarium. Does that bother you?”

“That’s fine by me,” said Brian, looking terribly relieved. “Who’s the buyer?”

“You might know him. He’s a nerve specialist named Frederick Chilton.”

Will started coughing when he heard the name. That was a name that he could go a lifetime without ever hearing again. Chilton had once remarked that he craved his brain. Though he knew Chilton had no intention of eating it, it had been a most awkward turn of phrase, almost as bizarre and awkward as the man.

“You know him?”

They say that when you speak of the devil, he comes. And so it was when a gaudy car that was a blend of powder blue and chrome came barreling towards them then stopped, unloading a small man holding a decorative cane. “I hope I’m not too late for lunch,” he said. “Oh, Will. Your uncle Jack has been asking me to talk to you.”

Will groaned.

***

Lunch was scarcely better. Instead of talking about the sale of the estate, Chilton continually moved the subject of the conversation to anything regarding Will.

“Your uncle Jack suggested that I either have you as one of my patients or become your fiance. That way I can make a new man of you.”

“Which method do you happen to prefer?”

“I’ll take whichever I can get.”

“I’ll pass on both,” said Will.

“Can we get back to talking about buying my estate?” said Brian.

“Oh, yes,” said Chilton. “I do like the open area and the large size of the main house. The distance from London is actually a plus in my view.”

“Oh, good,” said Brian.

“I also have dozens of patients who could move in as soon as possible,” said Chilton. “Lord Gideon is in desperate need of being kept away from his family. Oh and then there is Sir Tier who thinks he’s some kind of bear. His family once had to make him steak tartar all the time because he insisted as a bear, meat should be served raw.”

“Wow,” said Beverly.

“I don’t think you should be talking about your patients like that,” said Will.

“It’s fairly common knowledge,” Chilton said. “Do you empathize with them?”

“I’m showing some humanity.” He would’ve said something much more sharp except he didn’t want to botch Brian’s chances of selling the estate.

“Oh, look,” said Brian. “The roast beef’s coming!”

***

“Aren’t you going fishing, sir?” said Lecter. Will had decided to lay down on the couch the second he got home.

“No, Lecter, I have a headache.”

“Shall I assume that the luncheon played a part in creating said headache?”

“You may. I was planning on having a quiet lunch with a friend when two other people show up. One is a woman I once had a whirlwind romance with on a cruise ship. As such things go, it ended rather well since she doesn’t think too poorly of me and there are no lasting entanglements. She’s come to help up sell his estate. Unfortunately, Brian’s taking a bit of a liking to her and thinks just my being there . . .”

“Is an obstacle . . .”

“Yes but that’s not the worst of it. Another of Uncle Jack’s picks showed up as well.”

“Picks?”

“Someone he wants me to marry. His name is Frederick Chilton.”

“I have heard of the man. He is a quack.”

Will felt a little surprised at the vehemence in his valet’s voice. “My uncle obviously doesn’t think so. It doesn’t help that after lunch, Brian pulled me aside and said that he didn’t feel he could ask Beverly out until he had more than a pittance in the bank account. Brian now wants me to get Chilton to hurry up and buy the place from him even if it means . . .”

“Even if means . . .”

“Flirting with Chilton.”

“Your friend is scarcely deserving of the appellation. Let me help you with your headache. I’ll will make you something to drink and help massage your pain away.”

“Massage?” said Will as Lecter began making another concoction.

“Just drink this. I promise you that when you wake up, things will be better.”

Will drank it and let him knead circles into his temples. Will found himself feeling more relaxed and eventually, he fell back on the couch, asleep without a headache.

Chapter End Notes

Part of the plot stems from the episode "Chuffy" also known as "Jeeves in the Country." However, there are a few twists that distinguish it from that particular episode. And yes, Pauline Stoker is who I had in mind when it came to casting Beverly.

Chapter 4

When Will woke up, it was dark. “Lecter? Lecter?”

“I am here, sir,” he said, turning on the lights. “It is almost time for dinner. Per your instructions, I made a pork chop with a side of potato pancakes and steamed vegetables.”

“It smells lovely,” said Will. He sat down at the table and found himself eating again with his valet. “You really should’ve woken me up after half an hour.”

“You needed to sleep. I could not take your rest away from you. Anyway, it gave me time to consider your situation and find some solutions.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yes.”

“What are . . .”

“Eat first then I will tell you.”

His appetite refreshed, Will ate his meal with relish, especially the chop. After he had eaten his last bite, Will said, “What have you come up with?”

“I have asked Chilton to stop by in the morning.”

“What?” That was the furthest thing from a solution he had ever heard of.

“Do not worry. You will not be the one to talk to him. It shall be me.”

***

That night, Will slept poorly. He had a strange dream where Chilton had already turned Brian’s estate into a sanitarium and locked him in a private room on the upper floor. He was being forced into something that was a combination of a straight jacket and a wedding tuxedo. Jack was looking at him through the bars with approval, smiling and nodding with satisfaction.

He woke up and was about to ask Lecter to make him some tea when he heard Lecter open the door and greet Chilton. He hid behind his bedroom door and was about to go back to bed and pretend to be asleep when he saw his valet looming over the smaller man. Now he had not paid that much attention to Lecter’s size because they were the same height. Now that Lecter had taken off his jacket and only had his white shirt on top, Will noticed how broad and muscular his shoulders were. Lecter was whispering something into Chilton’s ears that made Chilton turn pale and look as if he was about to swallow his tongue. Lecter then smiled and gave him a wink before motioning him to leave. Before Lecter closed the door, Chilton

could be seen running all the way back to his car. Lecter turned and saw him peeking from behind the bedroom door.

“I heard the door open and it woke me up,” said Will.

“Chilton stopped by.”

“I thought that he was going to have breakfast with us.”

“Breakfast, no. He had no appetite for what I had offered him.”

“What precisely did you offer him?”

"I’ve heard some very interesting stories about this particular man from a servant who was once in his employ. I told Dr. Chilton that unless he signs the contract to buy Brian’s estate and promise not to darken your doorstep, I would share certain information to the general public, information that would make it hard for him to continue working as a nerve specialist.”

“He didn’t kill someone, did he? He doesn‘t seem the type.”

Lecter scoffed. “The man is not a killer. All I will say is that the words ‘panty girdle’ played a part.”

“Really?” Will did not care at all for the kind of images that combined Chilton with panty girdles. "What kind of part?"

“I can not give you any more information than that. What I told him should be enough to push Chilton into signing the contract so Brian can more actively court your former flame. However, just to make sure that she does not start chasing you, I telephoned someone last night, someone who owes me a favor.”

***

“Good news, Will,” said Brian as Will stepped out of his car in front of Brian's estate. “Chilton has just given me a check for the full amount. I can finally take Beverly out for the best time in London! Oh, I didn’t see you were . . .”

“This is my fiancee, Lady Bedelia Du Maurier. She missed my company so much she drove down to visit me,” said Will, introducing the blond woman who had gotten out of the car from the passenger side. He wondered how his valet had managed to win the cooperation of such a formidable woman. There was a rumor that she had once single handedly fought off a burglar, knocking him unconscious.

“You never told me about an engagement!” said Brian.

“It is not official,” said Bedelia. “There still needs to be discussions with his uncle.”

“Oh, that should be a breeze,” said Brian, laughing. “His uncle’s been dying to get him paired off for years now.”

“Is that so?” said Bedelia, giving Will a look that was a prickly mix of amusement and chilliness.

“How did you two ever meet?” said Brian.

“He was fishing while I was shooting quail,” Bedelia said. “We made a meal out of a productive afternoon. Will has told me that you have a most excellent wine cellar.”

“I do though it will be Chilton’s once I move out in a couple months’ time. I hope you both love champagne!”

***

“I hope that you did not come to believe in the little charade that we performed for your friends,” said Bedelia as he drove her back to the cottage where her car was parked.

“No. I don’t think Brian and Beverly were too believing of it, either,” said Will. Beverly had popped an eyebrow and appeared somewhat skeptical throughout lunch at Bedelia‘s telling of the less than romantic version of their imaginary courtship. Will had caught Brian and Beverly discussing how mismatched they seemed while sitting out of their sight, behind a row of hedges.

“In any case, they couldn’t accuse the both of us of being liars about our supposed engagement. Besides, it will be less shocking when there is the inevitable breakup. In any case, Brian and Beverly seem to be well on their way to becoming a pair.”

“I’m sorry that you ended up involved in this because of me,” said Will. "It is a long way to drive."

“It is not your fault. I know who is truly responsible for making me come down here. Besides, as far as favors go, it is a relatively small and simple one that does me little harm and costs me just as little.”

Will stopped his car and she got out. “Goodbye, Lady Du Maurier.”

She gave him a little nod of her head. “Goodbye, Mr. Graham, it may be that circumstances may cause us to see each other again. With that, she drove off.

Lecter walked out of the cottage. “I hope everything has happened according to your satisfaction, sir.”

“It has, thank you Lecter. I owe you a great deal.”

“But you seem down at the mouth.”

“Seeing Brian and Beverly together . . . It just reminds me of how utterly alone I am.”

“You’re not alone, Will, I‘m standing right beside you.”

“Lec . . .”

“Please call me Hannibal, at least when it is just the two of us . . .”

“Hannibal.”

The End

End Notes

I have never read the stories, I have only seen the Hugh Laurie & Stephen Fry TV episode versions. Also, I can't help but think that Jeeves and Hannibal share quite a few things in common. Both are manipulative (though Jeeves uses his powers for better purposes overall though, like Hannibal, his amusement & self-interest play a part in his machinations), intelligent, well read, and have strong opinions about what is or is not suitable (notes Jeeves has very strong opinions about Bertie's clothes and occasional appearance of a mustache). Bertie and Will don't have much in common as Will is quite a bit more insightful in general but both do tend to suffer in trying to help others. As for Jack, I am reminded a bit of the aunts.

Since Bertie calls his valet by his last name, I shall have Will do the same.

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